Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas

CHAPTER XIII

Andrew Lee Brock
Caldwell County

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ABOUT two years after Texas had been admitted to the Union, underneath the bucolic exterior the spirit of men and women was moving, preserving life, improving shelter, and sustaining communities, and caring about the cultivation of the mind and the advancement of learning. Great wagon trains of homeseekers were coming to Texas.

It was a considerable undertaking to move one's family from Missouri to Texas in 1848. But for Rebecca Montgomery it was a happy undertaking. Her entire family was going along to the new State where the opportunities knew no bounds. Just before leaving Missouri she and William Wayland were married and joined the caravan to Texas. They came in mule wagons. Naturally the journey was slow but it was a real honeymoon. Everything moved along nicely until they reached Dallas where the young husband became ill and died very suddenly. After burying him there, the family travelled on to Austin where a baby girl was born to Mrs. Wayland.

Two years later she moved with her parents to secure more land near Lockhart in order that her father might engage in the cattle business.

Shortly after that, in 1850, Rebecca married Andrew Lee Brock, a native of Virginia who had come to Texas via Missouri in 1849. Weddings in those days were great events. This young couple was popular. They had a home wedding to which the neighbors were invited. She wore a white tarleton dress which was lovely itself, and the young bride was an excellent seamstress and knew just how to add the dainty touches that brought out its best.

"Started farming with a wagon and team" was a favorite remark of Mr. Brock's in later years While he owned only a wagon and team, Mr. Montgomery gave him two hundred acres of land about two miles from Lockhart for a wedding present. They built a log house of hand-hewn logs, Mr. Brock doing most of the work.

"But, Rebecca would make me a green grape pie, when I did a good day's work," was a tribute from Mr. Brock.

There were two rooms across the front with a long shed room across the back and a long gallery across the front. The kitchen was just back of the house, but did not join it.

Mr. Montgomery also gave her a negro slave girl—Penny—who had always waited on her. Later they bought other slaves.

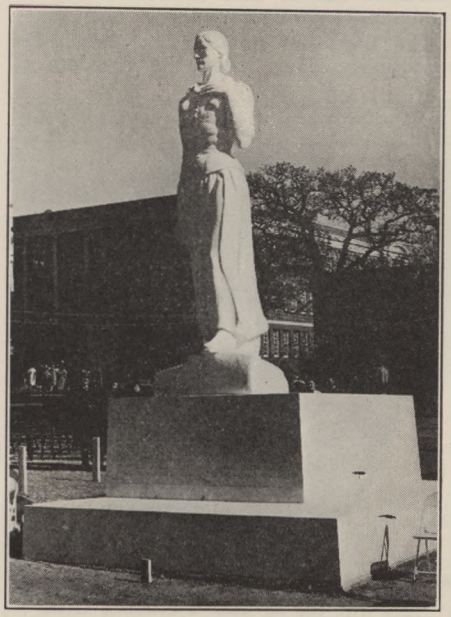
At first Mr. Brock devoted more attention to farming than to stock raising. Though he raised some cattle, his principal crop was cotton, although he raised corn, wheat and oats.

While Mr. Brock was busy farming and caring for his cattle, Mrs. Brock was busy caring for the house, raising a garden, seeing after the chickens, and sewing for her family. Before the war she did all of the sewing by hand. The rooms were dark, only one window was in the room where most of the sewing was done. She was an excellent cook, and the Brocks lived well. While the hogs ran "wild," one could be butchered anytime it was needed. There was an abundance of beef, plenty of quail, wild turkey and deer in season. They raised a large variety of vegetables in the garden. Tomatoes were raised for their beauty but they were not served on the table until later years because they were not supposed to be good for one. Some people even thought they were poison. Sweet potatoes were buried in the ground to be used during the winter. Turnips buried in the ground sprouted, so that both turnips and greens were available during the winter. A real treat in the spring was the wild greens including poke greens and dandelions which were found in the fence corners. Wheat and corn were taken twelve miles on horseback to a mill on the San Marcos River to be ground into flour and meal.

As the cotton industry grew Mr. Brock built a gin. It was old fashioned and was operated by mule power. He also ground flour and meal for the convenience of himself and his neighbors.

When the Civil War broke out Mr. Brock hauled cotton from Lockhart to Laredo for the Confederacy. He was allowed to serve the army by hauling since he was a married man. Three yokes of oxen were used for these trips. He took a load of cotton to Laredo and brought back a load of supplies—coffee, salt, sugar, calico and other supplies,

Pioneer Woman



This $25,000 memorial to the pioneer women of Texas was dedicated on the campus of the Texas State College for Women at Denton on December 6. Former Governor Pat M. Neff, now president of Baylor University, made the dedicatory address. Leo Friedlander of White Plains, N. Y., was the sculptor. The statue of Georgia white marble, is 15 feet tall and is on a 7-foot pedestal. Facing the road on the west side of the campus, the statue is in a parkway bounded by the auditorium, the library and the new arts building.

President L. H. Hubbard of T. S. C. W., presided at the unveiling, and K. W. Denman, Lufkin, president of the Board of Regents, formally accepted the statue from Claude Teer, chairman of the Texas Board of Control. Funds for the memorial came from the Legislative appropriation for the Texas Centennial.

Miss Jessie H. Humphries, associate dean of the College, and member of the faculty since the school opened in 1903, read the inscription which she wrote for the base of the statue.

"Marking a Trail," it reads, "in a pathless wilderness, pressing forward with unswerving courage, she met each untried situation with a resourcefulness equal to the need; with a glad heart she brought to her frontier family her homeland's cultural heritage; with delicate spiritual sensitiveness she illumined the dullness of routine and the loneliness of isolation with beauty and with life abundant; and withal, she lived with casual unawareness of her value to civilization. Such was the pioneer woman, the unsung saint of the Nation's immortals."

By MYRTLE MURRAY
District Agent, Extension Service
College Station, Texas

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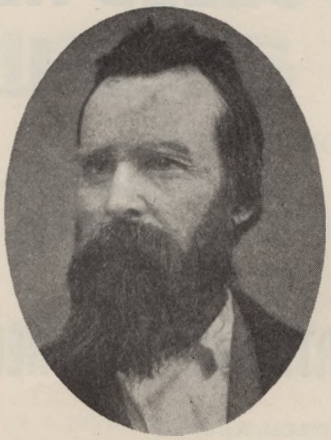
MRS. A. L. BROCK



A. L. BROCK

which were sold to the neighbors. Calico cost one dollar per yard. Because Mr. Brock could bring back supplies they were not as short of food and other necessities as many families were during the war. Sometimes they were a little short on salt and coffee. Parched wheat was a good substitute for coffee.

Mr. Brock would camp in order to get through with supper before dark, so the Indians might not locate his camp fire so easily. He was always watching for them. But the only damage they ever did was to steal the oxen a few times.

While Mr. Brock hauled for the Confederacy, Mrs. Brock remained at home with her four small children and the slaves, and managed the farm. The entire responsibility was hers but she enjoyed it. One year the corn was being plowed for the last time. And it was a beautiful crop. She could barely see the tops of the mules' ears as they were being driven between the rows. A cold spell came that night, and the next morning the corn lay low on the ground.

When the war was over Mr. Brock devoted more attention to the raising of cattle, and to raising and training race horses. Later he also raised mules which he usually took to Missouri. Mrs. Brock and the children made one trip with them. Mr. Brock placed a mattress in the back of the hack so that she would be comfortable. As they travelled through the Indian Territory they bought fresh vegetables from the Indians. The English peas were always shelled, which Mrs. Brock considered a great convenience. Mr. Brock gave them beef but paid for the vegetables.

The children grew up very much as the children of other pioneer families. All of them were born in the log house, excepting Sally. They attended public school in Lockhart, riding to and from school on horseback. Later Martha attended school in Seguin and Sally attended a private school in San Marcos known as "Mary & Martha." It was an exclusive school that restricted the attendance to twelve pupils.

The boys did not care so much for schooling. They loved the freedom of the early pioneer life and were interested in the cattle and horses. George, the fourth son began handling horses when he was nine years old. At that time he was too small to get on a horse unaided.

"Now, George, don't get off your horse, until I tell you," admonished his father. But every time George saw a rabbit he got off and threw rocks at it, and would have to be helped back on his horse.

George was eager to go "Up the Trail" with the cattle. When he was twelve years old he ran off with a trail herd and got as far as Fort Worth, when his brother-in-law, Mark Withers, sent him home. He started again when he was sixteen, but Mr. Withers would not employ him until he secured his father's consent. After that he made the trip many times.

In the early 70's the Brocks bought a three-room house from a Mr. North, which was probably the best built house in the country at that time. The large living room, heated by a huge inside fireplace opened out on a big front porch. Every room and the ceiling of the porch was plastered. Mr. Brock added to the house until it was a rambling, spacious house including seven rooms, three halls and two rooms upstairs with dormer windows. The windows all had wooden shutters. The four French doors, with their transoms above, opened out on the porch from the two front rooms. The lumber for the house was hauled by ox wagons from Port Lavaca. A walk, six feet wide, extended from the porch to the gate where one could get off or on his horse, or into the buggy without

The "Big Shot' of Hereforddom, pictured here with the big buck is evidently trying to convey the idea he killed it. Did you, R. J.? Or, are you just "spoofing"?

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stepping on the ground. And this was an important convenience during the rainy season.

As Mr. Brock prospered he took pride in adding conveniences and equipment available at that time that would add to the comfort and pleasure of the family. Mrs. Brock had one of the first sewing machines in the country. But, one of the greatest conveniences was the bath tub. It was an old fashion zinc bath tub, with a shower made by elevating two tin buckets over the tub.

The furniture, for the most part, was lovely old walnut furniture that had been brought from Missouri in mule-drawn wagons. The bedsteads were roped to hold up the mattresses, instead of using slats. The youngest daughter, Sally, now Mrs. Jessie P. Cardwell, still has two of the tables and part of a big walnut wardrobe.

The house was on Boggy Branch. It was called Boggy Branch because some Indians coming from Goliad after robbing a store, their horses all decorated with ribbons, were being pursued by the settlers who had chased them from Plum Creek. The Indians entered the stream but bogged down and were overtaken by their pursuers and many of them were killed.

One of the rooms of the house was called the "Wheat Room." The wheat had been kept in an upper room in the gin. A former slave of the Montgomery family bored a hole in the floor, through which he could take out the wheat, a little at a time, and sell it. After he was caught the wheat was stored in a room in the house.

The Brocks bought their first buggy after they moved to the "Big House." "It had a small seat in front for the children," recalls Mrs. Cardwell.

Mrs. Brock devoted her entire time to her home. In addition to rearing her own family, she practically reared four children of her half sister, Mrs. Mark Withers. Later her mother and a girl whom she raised came to live with her.

As there were no near-by banks, Mr. Brock kept his money in an iron safe.

The A. L. Brock home with walnut trees in front

One night a man wanted to spend the night but they did not keep him. During the night, the gin was burned. Mr. Brock and all the men rushed to the fire. Through the wooden shutters Mrs. Brock saw the stranger, who had asked to spend the night, stop at the gate. He, and some other men who were with him, evidently could not decide whether to enter the house. Mrs. Brock quietly took her children in the back part of the house, yet where she could still keep an eye on them. Just about the time they decided to come into the house, they heard someone whistling in the opposite direction of the burning gin. Thinking it was a signal whistle the men turned their horses and got away in quick order. The whistling happened to be one of the Brock boys who was returning from a dance and did not know about the fire. The supposition was that a confederate had set fire to the gin thinking that everyone would leave the house to go to the fire.

While Mrs. Brock was happily caring for the household, Mr. Brock devoted more and more of his time to the cattle industry, and to the raising and selling of mules and race horses. The race horses were his pride and joy. He trained them, entered them in some of the biggest races of the country, and sold them in New Orleans, St. Louis and New York. He sometimes kept four and five boys to care for them. His barns and stables were among the best to be had and were well known throughout the country. Eventually he lost heavily on his horses, but retrieved much of his loss by building and renting business houses in Lockhart, through farming and the cattle industry. But he always kept a fine saddle horse for himself.

The Brocks were noted for their hospitality, and Sunday was one of the busiest days for Mrs. Brock. After getting the children off to Sunday School she superintended the preparation of the

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"Sunday dinner," doing much of the cooking herself. Her children and many guests still believe that her chicken and dumplings, and fruit cake, had no equal in all the country. The children attended the dances, and gave dances. They danced the old square dances, the Schottische, and waltzes to the "fiddle music" of Henry Head, known as one of the best "fiddlers" of that time. Mr. Brock was a great swimmer. He had a dam built across a near-by branch in order to provide a swimming pool. He was also a great hunter.

Mrs. Brock had time to be a good neighbor. She was considered the best seamstress in the country and made many wedding dresses for relatives and friends. She embroidered her children's clothes, and added many dainty hand touches, which was a manifestation of her exquisite taste.

As each child married he was given from 100 to 120 acres of land as a wedding gift. They always lived at home for a few weeks, at least, before moving into a home of their home.

As Mrs. Brock grew older she devoted much of her time to piecing quilts and reading. She had graduated from a school in St. Louis before leaving Missouri. During the years she was rearing her children she had very little time to read. Apparently she welcomed the opportunity.

Mrs. Brock died in January, 1903. Mr. Brock lived with his youngest daughter, Mrs. Jessie P. Cardwell, for a while, but he was not happy away from his home. He secured a couple to keep house, but it was not home to him any longer. He died three years later.

The children now living are: Charlie Brock, lives near Lockhart; Emma, Mrs. S. B. Swearengen, and Sally, Mrs. Jessie P. Cardwell, both of whom live in Lockhart.

Clint and "John" Shirley

"Mary" had a little lamb, but Clint Shirley, Fort Worth commission merchant, goes her one better for his prize ten-year-old sheep follows him everywhere, stopping and waiting patiently while Clint talks, falling into step when he moves on, a veritable "me and my shadow." "John" was born on the Bob Mim's Ranch at Water Valley, April 5, 1928, one of twin lambs. He was "dogied" as it didn't look like the mother could care for both of her offsprings. "John" was given to a daughter of W. S. Armstrong, now postmaster at Water Valley. Sam Chapman of Blackwell was a later owner, buying "John" in a bunch of sheep in the spring of 1937 and taking him to Palo Pinto. Last spring Chapman noticed Clint Shirley playing with a pet and told him he would bring in a real pet the next bunch of sheep he shipped.

Upon arrival at the Fort Worth Stock Yards Shirley gave "John" a cookie and every morning since "John" has to have his cookie. If Shirley doesn't take "John" to a cafe at the unloading dock to get the cookie, "John" goes by himself and the cookie is put on the Shirley bill. He also must have his cigarette, as shown in the above picture, only "tailor-made" cigarettes will do. "John" follows Shirley all over the yards, going up the steps and along the two-foot walks on top of the cattle pens.

Shirley had a special pen built in the back of his coupe and "John" has made "personal appearances" at rodeos, conventions or other gatherings and on trade trips, Mason, Santa Anna, Colorado, Midland, Coleman, Ballinger, Blackwell, Bronte, Denton, Wingate, Hilton, the Central Texas Fair at Clifton and the Brazos Valley Fair at Waco are some of the places visited. The two latter visits were made with other "trade trippers" in large busses. "John" parades with the other Fort Worth representatives. He is a veteran elevator rider.

The blanket "John" has on in this picture was made to fit loosely and did so when he first started wearing it. "John" is old enough now to have put on the "middle-age spread."

"John" now has an understudy, a lamb from Robert Lee, named "Bobby" in honor of the town of his birth. He is wearing "John's" outgrown blanket to keep out the winter chill.

Now a dilemma has arisen. Shirley has become air-minded, visiting his customers through the upper strata. Planes are too little for "John," or vice versa. Or, maybe the Shirley-owned plane of the near future will have a special observation seat.

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